

DOUBT

SHERWOOD EDDY

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OR

PRACTICAL SUGGESTIONS FOR
THOSE HAVING INTELLECTUAL
DIFFICULTIES REGARDING
THE CHRISTIAN FAITH

BY

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DOUBT

DOUBT is a doorway. It is a portal that may lead to a larger life. It implies dissatisfaction with the cramped quarters of the past and a longing for larger liberty. It marks a natural transition from a second-hand tradition to a first-hand faith, from a borrowed creed to a personal conviction, from the realm of authority to the reality of experience. It leads from spiritual dependence to independence; from intellectual, moral, and religious childhood to manhood. But just because it is a doorway, it is a state both temporary and crucial. As Kant says, "Doubt can never be a permanent resting place for the reason; its function is transitional." It may lead either to the outer darkness of settled unbelief or to the open sunshine of a larger and surer faith.

Almost every advance in philosophy, in science, or in religion began with a doubt of the old order and a dissatisfaction with things as they were. Modern philosophy dates from the doubt of Descartes and others, which challenged the arbitrary assumptions of scholastic philosophy and the artificial system of the time which had been reared by tradition. Modern science also was ushered in by a period of scepticism which challenged the old authority which had so long enthralled the human mind. So also in the realm of religion.

Almost every religious cult or practice was in its

beginning the best and highest that its worshipers had known; but with the dawn of new light, this cult, if still blindly and stubbornly held, became a bar to progress. It had to be doubted and discarded if the new and higher light was to be realized. Doubt is the doorway of escape by which the dead past has been left, whether of tradition or ecclesiasticism, of superstition or error.

The modern student cannot accept upon blind authority a medieval orthodoxy which, whatever its elements of truth or worth for a former generation, has not been tested and proved by him. His whole training has taught him to prove all things, and to challenge all that would claim the allegiance of his faith. He has seen the disillusionment that followed the outworn creeds of medieval science, philosophy, and religion. He has had a glimpse at least of the freedom and larger life of modern times. Whatever his faith is to be, he feels he cannot take it second-hand from his parents but must find a faith of his own. At all costs he must begin at the bottom and build upon the solid rock of reality. But what is the rock of truth, and where is he to find it? He craves the same certainty in religion that he finds in the tangible realm of nature and of modern science. Naturally then he may turn to science for a method which shall guide him in his search for truth.

The brilliant achievements of the nineteenth century are due largely to the scientific method of induction, of experiment, of appeal to experience. This method does not start with a theory or a fine-spun deduction and then seek to corroborate it by facts. It starts with an impartial facing of the facts one by one, and after patient study seeks to discover the general theory or law which is in

accordance with the facts. If we analyze this inductive method, we shall find five elements involved in it.

First, there must be *observation*, or an honest facing of all the facts.

Second, the formulation of an *hypothesis*, or the most hopeful working theory to account for the facts.

Third, an *experiment*, to test the theory by the facts.

Fourth, there must be the *correction* of our theory not only by our own successes and failures, but by comparison with the results of others. We must build upon the past; we must accept the tested and approved results of other scientists and correct our own theories by the findings of other workers in the laboratory.

Fifth, the inductive method is completed by *verification*. We take that to be true which is capable of repeated verification; which not only satisfies us, but is also verified by all those who are competent and honest investigators. We appeal, however, only to competent judges. The fact that more than half the world does not believe that the earth moves around the sun does not disprove the fact, for a savage is not competent to judge of such matters. As a result of the application of this inductive method of science men have come to the great conclusion that nature is uniform, that it is reliable, that it responds to the honest investigator. And, on the other hand, men have found that *obedience is the condition of knowledge*, and only as the conditions are complied with and nature's laws obeyed, do we get the response which we desire.

Practically all the great achievements of modern science have been realized by the application of this inductive method of experiment. Columbus, the young student of natural science in the University of Pavia, observed cer-

tain facts which finally led him to the bold hypothesis that the earth was round. Twenty years of patient effort enabled him at last to make his great experiment. Against mutinous sailors and adverse winds and tides he held upon his course till at last he sighted a new world. Correcting his hypothesis by his own voyages and those of other explorers, he was finally proved to be correct by the circumnavigation of the globe.

So the great Newton had observed the facts of gravitation, and formulated his hypothesis of the law of gravity. His first experiment failed, but corrected by the findings of his friends he was able finally to verify his hypothesis and publish it for the benefit of mankind.

In the same way Darwin observed certain facts of variation and natural selection. He formulated his great hypothesis of hope. After twenty years of labor, correcting his earlier theories by the results of others, he published his "Origin of Species" in 1859. By the same principle the great discoveries of Copernicus, Kepler, and Galileo were made and all alike proved that nature is reliable and that obedience is the condition of knowledge.

If we turn to the discoveries of applied science and invention, we find that they were made by the application of the same method. Watt watched the steam of the tea kettle and slowly by patient experiment evolved the steam engine. Morse observed the electric spark, studied the law of the electric current, and had the faith to believe he could make it carry a thought. Men said he was mad, but for twelve years he persevered with his experiments in the teeth of opposition and in great poverty. Having corrected his instrument, he submitted it to be tested by others. At last his instrument flashed the message and

the world has been using it ever since. Bell tested and perfected his telephone by the same method. Becquerel took his piece of uranium and submitted it to an experiment, to test his hypothesis, by exposing it to a photographic plate. That stone had been waiting to speak and tell its secret for ages. Radium was thus discovered and has revolutionized modern scientific thought.

The methods of all these men were the same: observation, hypothesis, experiment, correction, verification. All alike found that nature is reliable and that obedience is the condition of knowledge.

Let us now apply the scientific method to religion. Can educated man have a rational faith, and a vital experience in religion today? Let us first ask, however, what we mean by faith and religion. Faith is not blind credulity or superstition. It may be conceived either as unverified conviction or as trust in a person. It is not opposed to reason but to sight, and we use it in all the relationships of life. Without faith there could be no organized commerce or business; there would be financial panic instead. Without faith there could be no science, if we did not believe in the reliability of nature and its laws. Every hypothesis and every scientific discovery is a step in faith, a venture into the unknown. For faith, whether in science or religion, means the same thing. "Faith is the scientific venture in action by which a man seeks to transform a reasonable probability, or something reported as fact by another person, into a practical certainty of his own personal experience." Faith, then, is a venture in action—an experiment.

In personal relationships, whether human or super-human, faith is trust in a person, based on knowledge

of character. Like friendship, it is a normal growth, natural and rational. Both Goethe and Carlyle hold that doubt of any kind can be removed only by action. Life reacts upon faith. Our faith is the product of our whole past life. It expresses the very essence of what we are. It is not some arbitrary thing, nor a mere casual opinion. "The pure in heart see God," not as an arbitrary reward, but in consequence of a spiritual law. Purity sees, trusts, knows by experience. Faith is the assent of the whole man—mind, heart and will—to God. It is, according to the writer of Hebrews, "the proving of facts not seen" (Heb. xi:1, Gr.). It is not credulity regarding subjective fancies, but the testing in experience of objective facts, and of unseen realities.

Doubt may be simply ignorance of God. We do not trust Him because we do not know Him. As in human friendship we trust a friend as we come to know him, so in the divine relationship we trust God as we come to know Him and fulfil the conditions of His friendship. The antidote for doubt is experience. And we live daily within reach of testing God and dispelling doubt.

And what do we mean by religion? Seneca's ancient definition of religion was "to know God and imitate Him." We would not be satisfied entirely with Kant's definition that it is "the recognition of all duties as divine commands." Rather, it is the whole life of man in his relations with the spiritual world. In its essence it is a relationship, a vital relationship. It is such a relation to the source and ground of existence as shall enable me to become all I am capable of becoming. If it is true, it should fully develop and then fully satisfy my highest nature.

Now, if there is a ground or source of existence, if there is a God, we should expect to find Him a reliable God, who would respond not only in the field of science or natural law, but also in religion. Here, too, we should expect to find that obedience is the condition of knowledge. But can the mind know that there is a God? Can the heart know that God is love? Can the will receive power to help one when fiercely tempted? Whatever my doubt, amidst the wreck of old superstitions; however great my scepticism, there are certain things of which I may be sure. First, I know that I am. "*Cogito, ergo sum*"—"I think, therefore I am." The mental process which attempts to disprove my existence only proves it. I may not know what I am, but I know that I am. I may not know what electricity is, but I can use it. We have knowledge enough for practical reason and for daily living.

And I know a second fact: I know that there is a difference between right and wrong. No student is sunk so low that he does not know that there is some difference between right and wrong. A moral monster no more disproves the conscience than an insane man disproves the reason. No man could maintain that it is right to murder his mother, rob his father, or wreck his own life.

And I know a third fact: that there are imperative reasons for doing the right. All history asserts it. My conscience confirms it. My experience has proved it. Ethics demands it. Religion assures it. Every man morally in earnest will admit that there are imperative reasons for doing the right.

And I know a fourth fact: I know thousands testify from personal experience that they have found God by

doing right. Thousands whose testimony I would accept in any court of law or on any other subject, thousands of educated men in every land, state that they have found God by obeying His laws.

And I know a fifth fact: I know that I ought to follow my highest nature; that I ought to do the right, and to test this hypothesis of God which has satisfied thousands of educated men. For if there be a God, and I refuse to make the experiment, then I am turning my back on possible light, on my own highest nature, on the hope of humanity, on my Maker and my God. One cannot prove with the reason alone that there is a God, but we may show that the burden of proof rests upon every man to test the hypothesis, to make the experiment, and to remember that obedience is the condition of knowledge. Faith is but a venture in action, rational and scientific. The only contradiction is between an unscientific belief and an unbelieving science. Science and religion do not contradict each other any more than astronomy and botany. The sun does not contradict the flower; they were made for each other. The flower turns its face to the sun to get its warmth and light.

Why, then, do I believe in God? I have two grounds for that belief: Science and Religion, two parts of one arch, two arms of one bridge, to span the gulf between the seen and the unseen, between man and God. Science at least points towards a first cause. It sees the great sweep of law, the onward march of evolution, of progress. It sees the signs of a great plan, a great purpose. And purpose, as we know it, is always grounded in will. Science points towards a cause; religion finds this cause. The reason gropes for God; the heart finds Him. What

science postulates religion proves. It finds it in definite, personal experience. As Mr. Balfour says in his "Foundations of Belief," "Science does not disprove religion but rather gives a new and added argument for religion."

Take even the well-known testimony of Darwin. Though he earnestly maintains that his findings are not "irreligious," he says of himself:—

"It may be truly said that I am like a man who has become colour-blind. . . . Up to the age of thirty poetry was a pleasure, also pictures and music. Now Shakespeare nauseates me and I have lost all taste for pictures and music. My mind has become a machine for grinding laws out of facts. Part of my brain is now atrophied. If I had it to do over again, I would read poetry, etc., once a week. A loss of these tastes is a loss of happiness and is injurious to the intellect and moral character."

In other words, he had not made the great experiment in religion, and he does not claim he has a right to speak on this subject any more than he would have on astronomy or any other branch of knowledge he had totally neglected. Bacon's familiar words are still true: "A little natural philosophy, and the first entrance into it, doth dispose the opinion to atheism, but on the other side, much natural philosophy and wading deep into it, will bring about men's minds to religion."

Sir Oliver Lodge writes: "The tendency of science, whatever it is, is not in an irreligious direction at the present time, but the realization of the unity of the cosmic scheme tends to faith and not to unbelief or unfaith. We are beginning to realize that the whole scheme demands real sense, an organizer, a manager, a controller, accessible to prayer, able and willing to help." Stating his own faith, he says: "I believe in one Infinite and Eternal

Being, a guiding and loving Father, in whom all things consist. I believe that the Divine Nature is specially revealed to man through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lived, and taught and suffered in Palestine 1900 years ago, and has since been worshipped by the Christian Church as the immortal Son of God, the Saviour of the world." While the great Newton says: "I seem to be a little child picking up the pebbles on the seashore of eternity." No one can deny that multitudes of educated men have made the experiment and have found God. Why should not you make the venture of faith? Will you not make the experiment and see if God will respond?

Romanes, the scientist, after years of agnosticism fought his way back to a rational faith. Writing of his new experience in his "Thoughts on Religion," he says: "Try the only experiment available—the experiment of faith. Do the doctrine, and if Christianity be true, the verification will come, not indeed mediately through any course of speculative reason, but immediately by spiritual intuition. . . . Such an experimental trial would seem to be the rational duty of a pure agnostic."

This method of appeal to human experience was the method of Christ Himself. It is found in the principle that if any man will *do* he shall *know*. It was toward the close of Jesus' ministry, as His conflict with the Pharisees was approaching its crisis, that He gave them this challenge: "If any man willeth to do his will, he shall know of the teaching, whether it is of God, or whether I speak from myself" (John vii: 17, R. V.). His words show at once the cause of unbelief and the condition of faith. Every word is significant. "If"—His promise is conditional. It depends upon the man him-

self whether or not he will fulfil the conditions. "If any man"—It is of universal application. "If any man willeteth"—His ultimate appeal is to the will. "If any man willeteth to do"—Doing is here made the condition of knowing. A right life is the condition of right belief.

There is then a causal connection between works and faith, between life and belief. "If any man willeteth to do His will"—*i. e.*, God's will. He takes men where He finds them. He judges them according to the light they already have. He makes the conditions of further knowledge and of belief in Himself to be obedience to the standard of truth which they themselves have already admitted and professed; for they have believed in God, and admitted that His will should be the guiding principle of their lives. "If any man willeteth to do His will, he shall know of the teaching"—*i. e.* the truth of the doctrines which He taught, and, by implication, of the claims which He made—"whether it be of God," authentic, authoritative, true, divine; or "whether I speak from myself," unauthorized, independent, mistaken, untrue. In a word, He says in substance, that if anyone will try to do what he believes to be the right, living up to the light that he has, and obeying the truth so far as he sees it, he shall come step by step to understand Christ's teaching, and to verify His claims, as to whether they are indeed the very truth of God or not.

Here, then, we have a great underlying principle and condition of belief. If any man will do, he shall know. Obedience is the condition of knowledge. Moral response is the condition of spiritual vision. And conversely, if any man will not do, he shall not know. Disobedience to truth is the precursor of doubt and sin, a cause of

unbelief. Every act of disobedience to truth and light, every sin, by however so little, dulls the conscience, darkens the mind, deadens the heart, weakens the will, affects the character. Professor James says: "When a resolve or a fine glow of feeling is allowed to evaporate without bearing practical fruit, it is worse than a chance lost; it works so as positively to hinder future resolutions and emotions from taking the normal path of discharge. The drunken Rip Van Winkle excuses himself by saying, 'I won't count this time.' Well, he may not count it, but it is being counted none the less. Nothing we ever do is, in strict scientific literalness, wiped out." By an inevitable psychological law the natural effect of sin is unbelief. And conversely, every obedience to truth, every moral response to duty, quickens the conscience, clears the spiritual vision, strengthens the will, places us upon a higher vantage ground, and prepares us for the perception of fresh truth.

As we proceed to speak of doubt and of the grounds of faith, we do not wish to discourage or discredit that earnest spirit of inquiry which seeks to prove all things, and hold only that which is true. We are not pleading for blind credulity. We have the fullest sympathy for honest questioning and fearless research. Descartes began by doubting all things, but it was in order to find the truth. He did not doubt for the sake of doubting, nor to cover up an inconsistent life and a guilty conscience. It was a questioning that led to faith founded on surer foundations, not a scepticism which led to settled unbelief.

But while we encourage inquiry, let us also recognize the limitations of reason. Outside of pure mathematics

the unaided human reason cannot absolutely prove anything. Plato, Bacon, and Kant have shown us that the reason alone cannot find God. Plato, groping for light, speaks of our having to sail the seas of darkness and doubt on the raft of our understanding, and adds: "Not without risk, as I admit, if a man cannot find some word of God which will more surely and safely carry him." Martineau says: "We can no more find God with the reason alone than we can find the scent of a rose with our fingers. It is not the faculty concerned. Faith is the faculty." And, like any other faculty, it may proceed rationally, rest upon evidence, and test the facts of experience.

All will depend upon the attitude which is behind our doubt—whether it is one of seeking to find light and to follow it, or seeking to prove there is no light because it loves the darkness. Doubt looks for light. Unbelief is content with darkness. Whether one has intellectual difficulties with regard to the Bible as the record of God's revelation to men, or concerning the person or work of Jesus Christ, or concerning God Himself in His providence and His personal relation to men, Christ's principle may be applied.

I. DOUBTS CONCERNING THE BIBLE

We need, do we not, some corrective of individual judgment. The individual reason is limited. Our spiritual vision and moral perception are clouded and darkened by sin. Our reason is not infallible and unchangeable, but with our growth in knowledge and moral purity our views change, and we must admit that we have made mistakes in the past. Again, my reason is at variance

with that of other men. Men wiser and purer than I differ from me. If, then, my own view of truth is not infallible, where may I turn for a corrective? Truth is often found at the intersection of conscience and tradition; at the point where my individual experience coincides with the collective experience of those who have followed the light and found it.

In the Bible we find the record of God's dealings with men and of men's search for God and their experience when they have found Him. We should therefore recognize the purpose of this record. It is that other men, by complying with the same conditions and obeying the same laws, should find the same experience of God. The object of the record then is that we may have *life* and that we may have it more abundantly. The Bible was not given to teach us history, or geography, or any branch of science, but to teach the essential truths of religion and morality. It was not intended as a rule of astronomy and geology, but of faith and practice.

Though not for a moment suggesting that revelation is a mechanical process like dictation, yet, to illustrate one point alone, suppose I dictate a letter to a stenographer. My purpose is to communicate a message to my friend. When the writer brings me the letter, suppose I find certain trifling mistakes in punctuation, spelling, or diction. I might destroy the letter, and compel him to write another; but even if I did so, he would still be fallible, and might make the same or other mistakes. As I look over the letter, however, I see that he has caught my meaning, and that my friend will get the message I intended. Therefore, while I may correct any serious mistakes, I sign my name to the letter, thereby endorsing

not so much the typewriting or punctuation or diction of the writer as the message and meaning I intended to convey. When my friend receives the letter, if he criticises the writing or punctuation, and does not see the good news or the message of love, he misses the whole point; but the fault is his, not mine.

The above illustration is not intended to suggest a mechanical method of inspiration, but only that the reader, instead of looking for the human limitations, asks the essential question whether the Bible does indeed contain the divine message of life for him. The Bible does claim to be a record of a revelation from God, and as such we may test it. Let us take it up as we would any scientific text-book, and study it by the inductive method. For illustration, suppose a class is beginning the study of chemistry. The text-book is by the greatest authority on the subject. The teacher commends the book to the students, stating that he has tested every experiment himself, and that the preceding classes also have found them true. The student should have enough faith in the author, the testimony of the teacher, and of those who have worked through the book in the laboratory, not to blindly assent to the whole but to try the experiments for himself one by one. The student finds that the book contains certain great laws or principles, and various experiments which illustrate or demonstrate those laws. He begins with the first experiment. He adds the acid to the alkali, and for himself gets the salt or base. Now one thing he *knows*. Faith has been changed by experiment into knowledge. And with increased confidence or faith he tries the second experiment. Thus, by experience doubt gives way to certainty.

But suppose a man fails in some experiment. He does not find the substance in solution which was supposed to be there. The other men in the laboratory found it, the teacher assures him it is there, and the text-book states it will be found if certain conditions are fulfilled. The student does not rashly conclude that the book is false, the teacher deluded, the other men all in error, or that the laws of nature have failed. He naturally concludes that he failed to fulfil some condition, and that the mistake was probably his own. He tries again, carefully fulfilling every condition, and now it works!

Now, let us take the Bible as a text-book, full of principles and experiments, of moral precepts and a promised experience, which will result upon the fulfilment of certain conditions. Every promise is an invitation to try an experiment with God. The author claims to speak with authority upon morality and religion, upon matters of the soul and of God. Nineteen centuries of successive classes of men have been testing its truth. In every age multitudes have been transformed by it, and have testified that through its truth they have found peace, have had power over sin, hope for the future, and that through it they have come to know God. It is the Word of God, because it meets the need of the human heart, and through it thousands have entered into vital relationship with the living God.

And it is the word of man, for it was lived before it was written. Its truth has been tested. It has filtered through the world's best life for more than twenty centuries. And its words will prove spirit and life to you, as to others, if it is tested, experienced, and incarnated in your life. As the German poet, Heine, wrote, "I

attribute my enlightenment entirely and simply to the reading of a book . . . an old, honest book . . . the Bible. . . . He who has lost his God can find Him again in this book; and he who has never known Him is here struck by the breadth of the Divine Word." While John Locke wrote, "Study the Holy Scriptures, especially the New Testament. Therein are contained the words of eternal life. It has God for its author, salvation for its end, and truth for its matter." The poet, Coleridge, says, "For more than a thousand years the Bible has gone hand in hand with civilisation, science, law, in short with moral and intellectual cultivation. I know the Bible is inspired, because it finds me at greater depths of my being than any other book."

As the Psalmist says, "Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path." In parts of the Orient in the old days they used to wear a small lamp on the toe of the sandal. It threw light at least one step ahead. If a man stood still he might complain that the way was dark, and refuse to move. But if he took one step in the light, there was always light enough to take yet another, and the light advanced in proportion as he walked in what he already had. So is it with the divine light of truth. We know by doing, we learn by obeying.

Begin with the first promise in the Sermon on the Mount, as did a well-known Brahman convert in India. He had made a comparative study of the other leading religions except Christianity, and was an authority on the Sanskrit writings of his own people. One day he was given a New Testament in a railway carriage. He read it out of curiosity. He was struck by the high moral teaching of the Sermon on the Mount. He said that as he

read on he was filled with admiration for the character of the man Jesus, and devoured the entire book to learn all he could of Him. At length he began to doubt His mere humanity. He longed to know if these claims of His were false or true. Was He indeed the Son of God and the Saviour of the world?

He turned back again to the beginning, wondering how he could put these claims to the test, and his eye fell upon the first promise, "Ask, and it shall be given unto you." Here was a chance to try an experiment, and put Christ's claims to the test. He said that he prayed somewhat in this manner: "O God, I believe in Thee, but I do not know if the claims of Jesus are true. Is He indeed Thy Son and man's Saviour? I do not understand this book, nor its historic allusions. Jesus claims that He will answer true prayer offered in His name. If He is indeed Thy Son, and all that He claims to be, give me the light I need; show me where I may find books or commentaries which will explain this book." He said he was called away soon afterward to a new place, and on entering the room found an old box containing five books, which proved to be a history of Israel and commentaries on the New Testament. Here, apparently, was his first prayer answered. He prayed again. Again his prayer was answered. Was it a mere coincidence? "There was someone at the other end." Step by step he put God's word to the test, until he came by personal experience into a vital relationship with God through the revelation of Christ. True to his convictions, he was baptized, stood the test of bitter persecution, and is today a living witness to the truth of God's word and the saving power of Christ.

Are you willing to put Christ's principle and the truth of the Gospels to the test as he did? If so, you will end by proving them experimentally to be a true record of a Person who is Himself the Truth and the Life. Faith is an honest assent to what we believe on evidence to be true. It is a natural growth, as truth is transformed into life, and the will yields to what the mind believes and the conscience approves. The Bible claims to be the Word of God. Its claims may be tested by experiment; they may be proved by experience. "If any man willeth to do, he shall know."

II. DOUBTS CONCERNING JESUS CHRIST

Again, let us follow the inductive method. Let us make sure of facts first. If we would deal more with these, we would have less doubt. It was the method of Jesus. He asked men to come and get acquainted with Him. He began at the base of the pyramid with His humanity, not at the apex of His divinity. Begin by reading through one Gospel with open mind. Do not *try* to believe anything. Facts ask no favors: moral truth has a self-evidencing power. Be honest, follow what you admit to be truth; and you will believe when you come to know the facts. If yours is merely an intellectual difficulty, daily intimacy with Christ and the honest effort to follow His teaching will dispel doubt as light dispels the dark.

But the cause of persistent unbelief usually lies deeper. The root of the trouble is often not in the intellect. It is not that men do not know enough, for, "*knowing* God, they glorified Him not as God, but became vain in their reasonings." It is the heart that is wrong, for, as Jesus

said, "Men *loved* the darkness rather than the light, because their deeds were evil." But the final cause of persistent unbelief in spite of all evidence, even of the visible presence of Jesus Himself, is just this: "Ye *will* not come unto Me that ye may have life." No amount of evidence will convince a man whose will is set against God, or against light. If a man will not do, he shall not know.

A guileless Nathanael instantly recognized Christ. Faith for him was but the look of a pure heart into the face of his Master. A doubting Peter needed more evidence. But Christ gladly gave it. He walked and talked with him for two years, and then asked Peter, "Whom say ye that I am?" And with a faith founded on the rock of experience Peter answered, "Thou art the Christ." The Jews still asked for signs. After three years of life and teaching they would not be convinced. Jesus took them on their own ground, and showed them the cause of their stubborn doubt. "How *can* ye believe" when your life is set against God? "Ye *will* not come." And here in the field of the will He gave them this final challenge: "If any man *willeth* to do God's will, he shall know" whether or not My teachings and claims are true.

Set your will on God's side. Try to do what you believe to be His will, and *God will give you light as fast as you are willing to walk in it.* Two instances of men at Yale University who tested this principle will illustrate the two alternatives.

The first was Horace Bushnell, one of the strongest minds of the last generation. He honestly faced his doubts one day in this manner: "Is there no truth that I do believe? Yes, there is one, there is a distinction

between right and wrong. Have I ever taken the principle of right for my law? Have I ever thrown myself out on the principle? No, I have not. Then, here is something for me to do. Here then I will begin. If there is a God, he is a right God. If I have lost him in wrong, perhaps I shall find him in right. Will he not help me, or perchance, even be discovered to me?" Speaking of his own experience in later years, he describes it as follows: "Now the decisive moment had come. I dropped on my knees and there I prayed to the dim God, asking for help that I might begin a right life. My soul was borne up into God's help. I rose. The whole sky was luminous about me. It was the morning, as it were, of a new eternity." As he took one step in the light, he saw from that advanced position far enough to take another step. As he obeyed the truth, and took the next step, God gave him light enough for yet another. Unconsciously he was willing to do God's will, though he did not at first know it as such. Step by step in personal experience he followed the light of truth, until he came to know a living God who answered prayer, a life-giving Saviour who saves from sin. And it was Bushnell who wrote "The Character of Jesus," one of the best short treatises on the divinity of Christ for men who are in doubt.

"Perplexed in faith, but pure in deeds,
At last he beat his music out.

* * * * *

He fought his doubts and gathered strength;
He would not make his judgment blind;
He faced the spectres of the mind
And laid them; thus he came at length
To find a stronger faith his own."

The other man came from the same college. He stood with a friend one night when his life hung in the balance. "I do not believe in Christ. This faith is all subjective with you men," he said. His fellow-student made him the challenge: "Are you willing to give up the sin in which you admit you are living? If you are convinced that Christ is divine, that He is your Saviour, will you yield Him your life?" He hung his head and counted the cost. At last he said: "No; *I will not*. I will not give it up for Him, nor for anyone." With a will set against God, his heart became hardened and his mind darkened. Doubt deepened into set unbelief. Within a few years he had run the downward course of lust and sin and death—a wrecked and wasted life. If a man will not do, he shall not know.

Whatever your past life or your present doubts, Christ's principle still holds. Will you honestly put it to the test in experience? You have at least enough light to take the first step. You admit that there is a difference between right and wrong. You will admit that there are imperative reasons for doing the right. An honest effort to do the right will soon show you the need of some standard of right, some example or pattern or goal toward which to strive, and the need of a power greater than your own to enable you to follow that example. What is the highest truth, the most perfect moral standard, the most winsome personality, the most perfect example you know? I think you will admit it is Jesus Christ. If you do admit this, are you willing, just so far as you see it to be the truth, to follow His teaching and example? If you are to follow Him, you will need to know Him; and if you are to get acquainted with

Him, you will need to go to the record of His life. If you are honest, you will be in earnest about this. Will you read through a single Gospel with open mind and apply the principle of Christ? Will you day by day read slowly through the Gospel of St. Luke or St. John in this way? Before you have finished, if you will obey what you admit to be truth, you may believe! Will you accept the challenge?

Read the three chapters of the Sermon on the Mount, and recall the *teaching* of Christ. Read the three chapters of the last discourse of Christ (St. John xiv, xv, xvi) to recall the *character* of Christ, and then with these in mind review the *claims* of Christ as illustrated and evidenced by His teaching and life. He claims at once to be the "Son of God," and the "Saviour of the world." He claims to be "the Water of Life," to satisfy the thirst of the human heart; "the Bread of Life," to satisfy its hunger; "the Light of the World," as its source of truth. He is the Way, the Truth, and the Life for salvation in this world; the Resurrection and the Life for the world to come. He claims to have come from the Father to reveal the Father, and to have returned to the Father, where He lives and reigns, the Risen Christ, with all power given unto Him in heaven and on earth! Who, then, is this? "What, then, shall *I* do with Jesus that is called Christ?" Like Pilate, you must decide that question.

Many men in every age and in every land with just your doubts and difficulties, or yet greater ones, have found their way into a satisfying and rational faith, in the glad certainty of a personal, vital experience. Are you willing to make the same experiment they did? Just

as you are, with all your doubt or difficulty, will you read through one Gospel, a little portion each day, with open mind and honest heart, and try to live by what your own reason and conscience find as truth? Will you try to follow the life and teaching of Jesus, step by step, as it appeals to you?

“If any man will do His will, he shall know.”

